

are also rampant. For example, unscrupulous contractors offer “super bargains” on home improvements or repairs, but having taken the consumer’s money, leave the job unfinished or improperly done. Some companies use high-pressure sales tactics to sell older consumers expensive products that are of little or no benefit.

In response to the rapid growth of consumer fraud that targets seniors in North Carolina, the NCDOA joined forces with AARP and the NC AG’s Office to establish the NC Senior Consumer Fraud Task Force in 1998. The task force brings together federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, aging advocates, the aging network, state and local Better Business Bureaus, and crime prevention agencies. One of the task force’s primary missions is to educate consumers about fraud and scams operating in North Carolina and teach them how to avoid becoming victims. The NC AG’s Office regularly disseminates “Consumer Fraud Alerts,” designed to inform consumers about the latest scams and other deceptive practices operating in the state. These alerts are posted on the NCDOA website.

The Senior Consumer Fraud Task Force worked closely with other key stakeholders to get the NC Predatory Lending Law of 1999 passed. This law is considered one of the strongest predatory lending laws in the country. Aging advocates continue to promote other consumer protections, including passage of the “Do Not Call” legislation.

Planning and Evaluation

While this chapter began with advocacy, because it is the first building block for developing senior-friendly communities, it concludes with planning and evaluation, a vehicle to realize the advocated changes and improvements in North Carolina. Planning and evaluation activities use increased awareness to help construct and sustain communities that are senior-friendly.

The NCDOA plays a leadership role in conducting planning and evaluation activities that lead to creating senior-friendly communities in North Carolina. Specifically, the NCDOA’s planning and evaluation activities are guided by three distinct yet interrelated tasks: increasing the focus on results, expanding local capacities, and

improving collaboration across agencies and programs.

The focus on results is indirectly but clearly driven by the federal Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993. The GPRA compels federal agencies and programs to set performance-oriented goals and establish a mechanism to measure the degree to which these goals are met (US General Accounting Office 1997). Since 2000, the NCDOA has participated in the national, GPRA-prompted Performance Outcome Measures Project (POMP), designed to develop measures suitable for assessing the performance of community-based aging services. The AAAs in Regions I and N; Johnston County Council on Aging; Senior Services, Inc., of Forsyth County; and the CARES program at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work are the NCDOA’s partners in this project.

The NCDOA is interested in expanding local capacities to encourage community ownership and full participation in planning and evaluation activities for creating senior-friendly communities throughout North Carolina. In 2002, the NCDOA, with support from the NCDHHS Long-term Care Cabinet, developed an approach to support local planning for long-term care (see the chapter on long-term care and aging for further discussion of this). The NCDOA has also emphasized community planning in its development of the North Carolina Family Caregiver Support Program. The NCDOA is interested in pursuing other means of supporting communities as they assess the extent to which they are senior-friendly and pursue strategies to respond to the aging of their populations. North Carolina can learn from the experience of AARP in its development and use of *Livable Communities*, an evaluation guide that helps communities to create an environment that supports independent living as people get older (Pollack 1999). The NCDOA anticipates assisting North Carolina in joining the National Governors Association (NGA) and other states in examining policies and practices that can help communities adapt to meet the needs of older citizens.

In supporting communities becoming senior-friendly, collaboration among agencies and programs, public and private, is imperative. In the past several years, the NCDHHS and its divisions